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From Sharing Time to Showtime! Valuing Diverse Venues for Storytelling in Technology-Rich Classrooms

Two nine-year-old children draw upon a broad range of storytelling resources (voice, print, drawing, digital graphics, music, and video) to position themselves as storytellers in a technology-rich summer literacy class, although the two approach their stories in very different ways.

You know Miguel? When you have a question, he makes a whole story out of it. He has like, reading is like the biggest part of his brain, and everything else is so tiny.

—Inma, interview

Inma and Miguel, focal children for this paper, formed part of a group of 10 nine-year-old children who told stories and created multimodal movies at Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth (DUSTY), a literacy and technology program located in a low-income community in a large northern California urban area. Inma, as Miguel's "cousin" (the mothers were such close friends that the children called one another cousins) uses brain size as a metaphor to capture Miguel's love of reading and oral storytelling. For her part, Inma preferred the role of a multimodal storyteller who enjoyed authoring and creating stories on her own. Their experiences help us as researchers and teachers understand the social purposes and dynamics of storytelling in a technology-rich classroom. I focus on how Miguel and Inma and children like them used different oral, written, visual, and digital modes as resources to create meaning and to position themselves socially through such multimodal stories.

In some ways, Miguel and Inma (both pseudonyms) were typical of their peers in their storytelling practices, but they also differed in the ways in which technology figured into their storytelling lives. Miguel, as Inma and his mother both concurred, was certainly a reader and storyteller par excellence, but he was surprisingly uninterested in multimodal technology as a storytelling resource. Inma, by contrast, excelled in the multimodal storytelling genre and continually sought ways to bridge school-based literacy practices with her newly forming uses of technology. In documenting their two contrasting examples, I keep an eye on what each of their experiences can remind us

about the multiple modes of learning and sharing that inhabit some technology-rich classrooms.

After having worked with children and young adults in both technology-rich classrooms and in after-school programs for several years, I have experienced the creative ways that teachers and students can engage with literacy learning through technology. I take the view that technology can add a powerful layer to the literacy resources that children like Inma draw upon in telling their stories, particularly when the children's style overlaps with storytelling norms typically promoted in conventional classroom literacy instruction. However, as I will demonstrate, the role of technology is more ambiguous and less well understood for "the MIGUELS" in our classrooms. With Miguel, storytelling was less about the format and presentation of a prototypical story with a carefully crafted climax and resolution and more about the social purposes that motivate shared community building and interpersonal relationships (Dyson, 1997). To understand how both Inma and Miguel positioned themselves as storytellers using technology, I examine the narrative choices and social interactions that surrounded their oral and multimodal storytelling.

MULTIPLE MODES FOR TELLING STORIES AT DUSTY

The literacy tools available to Inma, Miguel, and their peers were multiple and multimodal. Prior to participating in this class, most of them had, as Miguel explained when he saw the laptop computers, "never used one of those before, ever—I'm not kidding." The literacy resources available to them at DUSTY ranged from personal journals and laptop computers to wireless Internet connections, scanners, digital cameras, digital recorders, and a voice capture studio. This last place, a quiet closet on the second floor of a converted convent,

was a group favorite where, as Inma likes to explain, “the computer is just like Ariel’s bottle in *The Little Mermaid*” because it can capture their voices for use at a later time. She and her peers learned how to fill up that imaginary bottle, not with the monotone voice common in many young children asked to read text aloud in front of a listening audience, but with the intonation and emotion characteristic of true storytellers.

Certainly, the wealth and range of technological resources available at DUSTY are not common in many low-income areas in the United States, but neither is it particularly *uncommon* anymore (Warschauer, 2003). What characterizes both after-school centers and schools is not necessarily the *availability* of sophisticated technology, but more often the knowledge of how best to utilize these multiple tools for literacy learning (Hull & Schultz, 2002; Leu, 1996; Leu & Reinking, 1996; New London Group, 1996). After-school centers such as DUSTY can provide important places for teachers and researchers to examine how technology intersects with literacy learning, particularly because such alternative learning spaces are less tied to the curricular and time constraints often faced by teachers in schools (Hull, 2003).

So what do digital media actually provide children as they explore the meaning-making potential of storytelling? After all, teachers creatively integrated multiple modes of storytelling into their classrooms well before the advent of the personal computer. As a literacy teacher who has worked with young learners for several years, I often heard, and personally voiced, the protest: “But what makes using technology better than *not* using it?” I agree that children already have multiple modes of sense-making and meaning-making in more conventional print- and story-rich classrooms (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Dyson, 2003). Nonetheless, we are just beginning to discover how children’s storytelling practices unfold in a technology-rich environment, an important area that Inma and Miguel helped me begin to explore.

I examine how Inma and Miguel draw upon a broad range of storytelling resources—voice, print, drawing, digital graphics, music, and video—to position themselves as tellers and knowers and as members of a classroom community. Before turning to their stories and social interactions,

I first introduce two concepts of personal narrative: *tellership* and *tellability*. These notions are helpful for understanding both how storytelling unfolds in a technology-rich classroom, as well as how children position themselves in quite different ways to their peers, their audiences, and themselves in their roles as multimodal storytellers.

TELLERSHIP AND TELLABILITY: EXAMINING HOW STORIES UNFOLD

In their book *Living Narrative* (2001), linguistic anthropologist Elinor Ochs and social psychologist Lisa Capps explore the many dimensions of storytelling, particularly the types of narratives that unfold in the day-to-day fabric of family life. Two of the dimensions they explore—tellership and tellability—are especially relevant constructs for helping understand the case studies of Inma and Miguel. These constructs can serve as useful heuristics for marking some of the salient differences and similarities in how the students approached oral and multimodal storytelling.

Tellership (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 24) focuses on how much autonomy a person has during the narration of an event. On one end of the continuum, the storyteller holds the floor during the unfolding of the tale, while the audience’s role is typically to listen attentively. Certainly, the words of the story will echo prior uses in other contexts among the listeners (Bakhtin, 1981), but for purposes of comparison, it can be helpful to characterize this type of storytelling

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as *single tellership*. It often comes into play during many mainstream storytelling events and can provide access to social power in many classrooms (Gee, 1996). On the other end of the continuum of tellership, a narrator shares the telling of

a story, and the listeners themselves are actively involved in shaping the way the story is told. Such *shared tellership* often occurs in casual conversations among peers, friends, or family members who actively participate in co-telling the narrative. They challenge a fact here and there, ask questions, and elaborate on parts of the story.

Typically, multimodal storytelling is characterized by single tellership, because the final product is a digital movie shown on a screen for an audience. For reasons such as limited time and the

pace of conversational flow, showcasing stories as movies is not very easily embedded in ongoing conversations among peers. In DUSTY's multimodal context, however, there were also many opportunities for shared tellership. Familiar classroom literacy-related events and storytelling moments took place during the process of making a movie, and various literacy practices—journal sharing time, author's chair, literature circle—formed an important part of the daily routine.

Second, the *tellability* (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 33) of a story concerns the interest level it might hold for others. Of course, whether or not a story is considered interesting depends not only on the personal preferences of the listeners, but also on the social and power relationships surrounding the storytelling events. Typically, stories that are organized rhetorically and that involve a crisis or climax are likely to have enough interest to be told and retold across different contexts. Not surprisingly, stories with this type of *performance tellability* often wield more social power in classroom settings because they conform to classroom notions of what constitutes an "interesting story."

At the opposite end of the spectrum, stories with *everyday tellability* are not primarily performances for an audience. Rather, they serve as social forums in which children share the more mundane, but nonetheless critically relevant, stories that form the fabric of their everyday lives. These stories do the vital work of building community and creating a classroom culture in which all kinds of stories hold an honored position. They are told during informal activities like watching TV, having snack at school, or riding the bus. As Dyson and Genishi explain, it is through these stories that "we fashion our relationships with others, joining with them, separating from them, expressing in ways subtle and not so subtle our feelings about the people around us" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 3). This form of everyday tellability serves as verbal glue that over time binds people together.

At DUSTY, multimodal stories were usually characterized by performance tellability, not everyday tellability. Common themes included family, friends, personal discoveries, and rites of passage: a family trip to the parents' hometown in El Salvador, a trip to the zoo in which a baby tiger

escaped, the death of a beloved grandfather, or the personal impact of a favorite singer-songwriter's death. To create these stories, children converted their handwritten story into a multimedia feast of images, music, movement, and voiceover after multiple revisions and editing sessions. Rarely, however, did multimodal stories evolve out of stories of everyday tellability, those that took place during informal classroom conversations about everyday topics: a weekend activity, a shopping trip, a trip to the movies, or a birthday party.

Before turning to Inma and Miguel to examine how the constructs of tellership and tellability played out in their storytelling practices, it is important to emphasize that neither end of these

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spectrums—from single to shared tellership or from performance to everyday tellability—is considered inherently more valuable than the other. Inma's stories, while well suited for the single authorial voice and performance tellabil-

ity of multimodal stories, were in no way more purposeful or meaningful than Miguel's stories, which tended to be shared stories about everyday happenings. However, in asking how storytelling intersects with technology, such terminology can be useful. It helps us articulate some of the subtle differences in how stories unfold in interaction, and in how those differences are linked to social positioning and issues of power.

THE CASE OF INMA: A CHILD AT HOME WITH MULTIMODAL STORYTELLING

Inma was a student who embraced learning, worked easily with peers, and engaged quickly with subject matter. She liked to exclaim how much she loved school and once countered several boys' description of school as "boring" with a cheerful, piping objection of "No, it's fun!" Throughout the summer, she often took on the teacher's role. During writing time, I often heard her explaining the journal prompt to latecomers with softly whispered, probing questions. During computer work, I recorded her multiple times as she leaned over to the computer screen next to hers and imitated the kind of teaching she had witnessed from her teacher. She would ask questions, point, prompt, and wait patiently for her peer to work out a solution.

Inma and Single Tellership

Inma valued her voice and her thinking, as demonstrated by her enjoyment of peer teaching, and she was confident in the single tellership of multimodal storytelling. The technology-rich classroom context provided Inma with many opportunities to position herself as a confident storyteller among her peers. Her preference for written narratives and for single authorship came through, not just in her multimodal storytelling, but also during journal time. Unlike many of her peers, who preferred to *talk about* their writing, Inma always read directly from her journal, relying on the conventionally privileged authority of the written word over oral sharing.

For Inma, then, it appears that literacy activities were neatly compartmentalized in ways reminiscent of her previous school-based activities; storytelling was seen as a bounded performance with single tellership. Even when she created her multimodal movie, a process that took two weeks, she preferred to work independently as a single narrator on her story without peer or teacher input on her storyline. During computer time, she would interact with other students, but only to assume a teacher's role in helping with technical questions, not to help them revise or embellish their stories.

Her confidence with single tellership also played out in how she positioned herself as a peer tutor. As she gained expertise using the software programs, she became a tutor, not only for her same-aged peers, but also for the handful of college students who volunteered several hours a week to help at DUSTY. These volunteers had limited knowledge about the particular software programs being used, but they nonetheless would often try to take on the role of teacher whenever a problem occurred. Their attempts to step into those roles were often curtailed by Inma, however, who had quickly gained confidence in her own ability to problem solve and to teach others about technology. In the following excerpt, for example, Inma is explaining to Kathy, a college student, how to size images in Photoshop:

Inma: *So, now I'm gonna go to image, image size, then I'm gonna go to here and then, whoa, 480, now I'm gonna, hmmm, which background do I want? I want more of a grayish background. So I'm gonna go over here, go here, go here, uh oh, something happened.*

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Kathy: *I think you have to go to the bigger ones, 640.*

Inma: *I know what to do now. I step backward, and step backward. And now, what do you think I'm going to do?*

Kathy: *I don't know. (July 30)*

Inma made two moves typical of her social positioning during computer time. First, she offered a play-by-play of her actions to help the adult sitting next to her see and hear the technical procedures. When Inma hit a glitch, she momentarily paused to study the problem. In a typically "teacherly" move, Kathy automatically tried to problem solve for Inma. While her suggestion was both

helpful and correct, it repositioned Inma as a learner, a role she neither needed nor wanted. At that point, Inma reasserted her agentive role as both the problem solver ("I know what to do now") and as the teacher ("What do you think I'm going to do now?"). Such question-

ing techniques echoed the interactional moves she had earlier picked up from her teacher as a strategy for working around computers.

In an interview at the end of the program, Inma reflected on this and other peer teaching encounters as one of the reasons she liked spending her summer at DUSTY:

At the same time they [the teachers] were teaching me, I was teaching others. . . . I really liked doing that. . . . What I like about the teachers is when, like if you were to go to another summer, summer, um, program, what they would do is they would like tell you most of the answers that are hard for you. What I like about here is you give hints to people, and you tell them where you could go find it and everything, yeah, I really like that. (Inma, interview, August 8)

In addition to her enjoyment of peer teaching, Inma acted as a community builder in class. In group discussions, she often clapped or yelled out an encouraging "Yay!" after a peer read a story. In many of her journal entries, she wrote about caring for other people: "I will help all the kids that don't have nothing but their lives and families that are also poor, or don't love them anymore." She extended this concern for others in building community at DUSTY:

Today another kid came to our class. His name is Melvin. I taught him some things. And here is what I learned on the computers. I learned how to search pictures and download them to my computer folder. (July 9, journal)

These entries were generally accompanied by intricate drawings. In her journal entry, for example, next to the written entry, she drew a picture of herself working at the computer with Melvin sitting beside her (see Figure 1).

Despite Inma's enthusiasm for building community, she did not tend to tell stories with shared tellership. Her comments typically revolved around peer tutoring, written texts, and multimodal movies. Her own movies, as explored in the next section, were well-crafted products with a high degree of performance tellability.

Inma and Performance Tellability

Inma was well aware of the need to tell a story with the kind of performance tellability that could engage an audience. Her stories were well organized rhetorically and centered on moments of high interest. For example, she chose to tell about a trip to the zoo in which a baby tiger escaped, and with a thrilling twist, actually ran through her legs before darting back into its cage. As Inma explains, a story like hers was worth telling because it had "lots of details":

The more details, the better the story is going to be, and other people are going to be so interested in your story, because they are going to say, "Oh look, that has lots of details," and like if they are seeing another movie without details, then they're gonna say, "Let's go to the details movie." (Inma, interview)

For Inma, a "details movie" included descriptive aspects, such as the conventional who-what-when-where examples she cited as essential components: "Like how did you feel, when did it happen, what time was it, what did you get there?" (Inma, interview). When asked to think about how a multimodal story might change her written story, she focused on the need to use images thoughtfully and to record her voice with emotion and intonation:

[A multimodal story] gives them a lot of details, like pictures would also help. With the transitions, you can see how pictures would actually move.

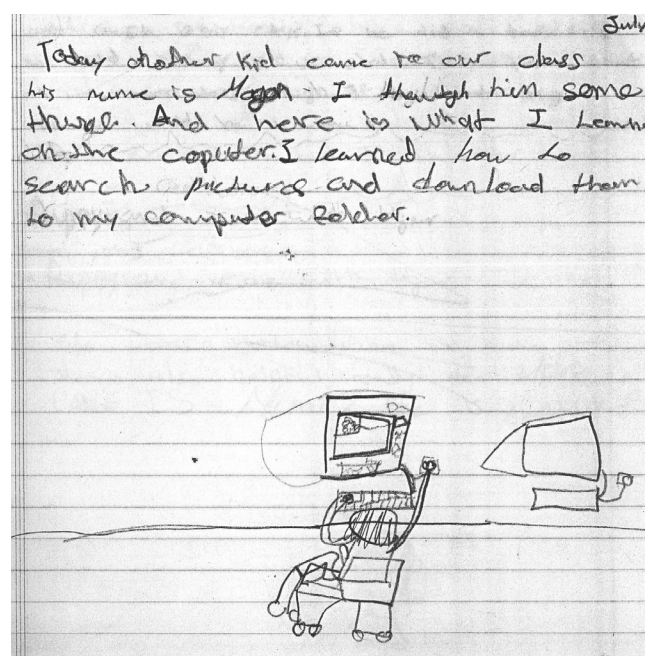


Figure 1. Inma draws herself in the community-building role she assumes during class.

It's like if you were to go to a movie theater. . . what you see is just going around with the camera. But then with [multimodal stories] you have the pictures with all the transitions moving and moving. And also I think that also a good thing, also like writing, you may be on like, on stage with a microphone, and [she imitates in a shy, low whisper] you go, "One day," and I read like that. And then [at DUSTY] you're not afraid when you go upstairs with the microphone with Ms. Jeanie and you say [she imitates a bright and cheerful voice], "And one day this and this and this happened," and then so your movie looks better and also with all the pictures, it's also good. (Inma, interview)

Through such multimodal layering of text, voice, image, and music, Inma drew strongly on the performance aspects of storytelling. She became even more aware of and confident in her ability to perform a story that would hold her audience's attention. She learned to use a range of representational resources to reinforce, enhance, and manipulate the impact of an otherwise print-based story.

As an example of her attention to creating narrative effect through images, she spent 90 minutes enhancing a single image of a tiger with Photoshop, even though the image flashed on the screen for only two seconds during her two-minute movie. To render this tiger's intellectual prowess, she

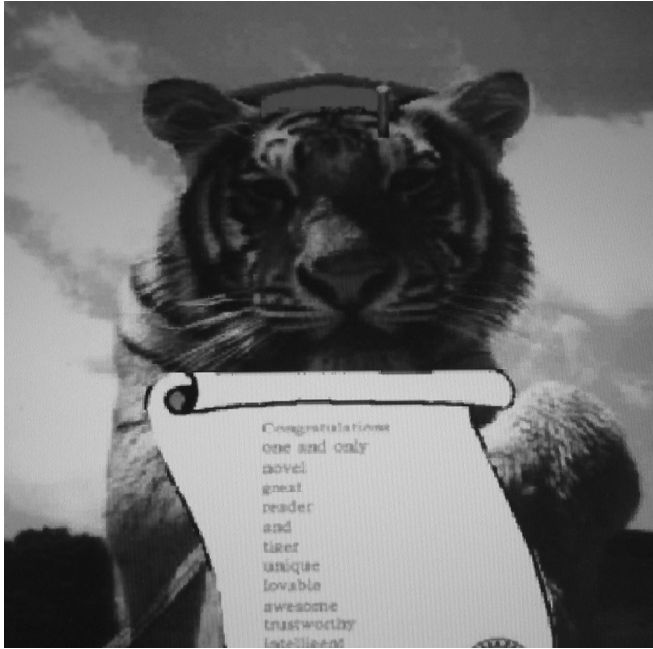


Figure 2. *Inma takes great care to support her narrative through images.*

used digital tools to draw a graduation cap and gown and created a diploma on which she had written an acrostic poem with the word “CONGRATULATIONS” (see Figure 2).

Inma explained that such careful elaboration of the main character of her story—a tiger in the zoo—was necessary so the audience would know that “he was so smart because he knew where all the animals were.”

At DUSTY, storytelling was accomplished in two ways. First, as Inma shows, stories were performances in which children wove together a multilayered text full of voice, images, music, and movement. Children were asked to perform their writing by reading their work aloud when they recorded their voices for the multimodal story. Second, as the case of Miguel will highlight, stories were shared orally through community activities such as literature circle, journal sharing, and author’s chair. These were relaxed, supportive occasions in which students could share their work by talking about it, rather than by reading directly from a paper. For Miguel, who was an exceptional storyteller in this second type of community sharing, the performance aspects of multimodal stories were of little interest.

THE CASE OF MIGUEL: MAKING SPACE FOR ORAL STORYTELLERS IN A MULTIMODAL WORLD

The case study of Miguel offers a striking example of how a child’s talents and preferences as an oral narrator do not always map onto an identity as a public moviemaker. For Miguel, it seemed, storytelling took place when he could share the tellership with others and spin tales that revolved around everyday topics. He preferred to embed stories in ongoing social conversations, latch his thoughts onto those of others, and extend invitations to his peers for jointly constructing tales. In this way, he positioned himself as someone who created community and shared power with others.

Miguel and Shared Tellership

Miguel’s need for story marked his interactions at DUSTY with many examples of shared tellership. Instead of taking the floor to tell a story with closure and climax, he used stories as a way to narrate with others and to bring other voices into the weaving together of shared memories. As an example of his storytelling style, taken from an interaction three weeks into the summer program, he offered to read his work in literature circle for the first time. Before agreeing to share, however, he worked out a bargain with his teacher in which he could simply talk about what he wrote, clarifying, “I’m not going to look [at the paper]” (July 21). After sharing his story, he kept the floor for several more minutes by encouraging his friends to join him as co-tellers:

Miguel: *We play baseball and last time, Juan he, um, we played baseball and we went and played hide and seek. Sometimes my cousins—just jump on me— . . .*

Ms. Shannon: *That would be so good to put in your story.*

Miguel: *No, they’re just, they’re just little kids—they’re cousins that they’re seven and eight. I run as fast as I could but they’re too fast, then um I saw Juan, and he said, forget it bub, and aaah, and they got on me.*

Tyrone: *It’s like one time when Devon’s little brother and Marcus they’re all jumping on me at the school . . .*

Miguel: *Oh, I seen that, yeah um, because Devon’s little brother, he is really fast—he was*

chasing me and Maria, we said, he'll never get us, and he came up and we began to running . . .

Tyrone: . . . and then my friend started bashing me in the head

Ms. Shannon: *Oh my, were you ok?*

Tyrone: *Yeah.*

Miguel: *Devon's little brother . . . he said, like mean words to his brother—what to do—to chase us—to, were you there [turning to Tyrone]? Yeah, he said to chase the four of us, and then um, he began to chase Sergio, he began shouting like a girl.*

[Several children giggle.]

Miguel: *And it was ME—I began shouting like a girl too [giggles] and then it was Tyrone's turn but he was just running. He didn't shout.*

In this example, his teacher tried to steer Miguel's elaborating comments about his story toward a writer's need to revise one's work ("that would be so good to put in your story"). She often offered students such encouragement to revise their stories with as many details as possible. Miguel, however, did not view this storytelling moment as an opportunity for revision, but rather as a chance for shared tellership. He interpreted her comment as a need for clarification ("No, they're just kids"). When his friend Tyrone joined in the telling, Miguel kept Tyrone involved by checking his facts occasionally ("Were you there?"). For Miguel, stories were social events to be taken up, challenged, reworked, and elaborated on by others.

In addition, when working with the college tutors during computer time, Miguel did not use the time to enhance his multimodal story, as Inma did. Instead, he created more opportunities for sharing stories. Miguel would secure the help of a college student volunteer on technical aspects of the movie-making process, then he would relinquish all control of the mouse so that he could be freed up to resume his oral storytelling. While the college volunteer worked on his movie, Miguel would get the attention of other students near him and orchestrate computer time into sharing time. He conducted his own version of an independently run author's chair, in which he volunteered comments about other students' movies, talked at length about books he was reading, and asked tu-

tors about their lives. Occasionally, these discussions were briefly suspended so he could lean over to look at his computer screen and offer the tutor directions on what to do next.

Miguel and Everyday Tellability

Oral stories on all kinds of everyday topics came pouring out of Miguel, and he consistently found creative ways to gain the floor in order to tell them. The following examples document the variety of strategies he used to freeze, temporarily, the ongoing discussion and to find a way to spin his everyday stories. They tended to center on his recent activities or on a memory sparked by

the ongoing flow of conversation. In many cases, Miguel would find a remote link between comments under discussion and a story that took the conversation into a different direction altogether:

"You know how you're afraid of spiders? Well . . ." (July 7)

"It reminds me of my mom, when she took me to Sears or Penny's or one of those boring stores . . ." (July 8)

[Interrupting Juan to take the floor] "You mean poison frogs. In the rainforest . . ." (July 8)

"You know the part about the frog? I have a story about that. When I was a little boy . . ." (July 8)

"When I had seven, six, or eight crickets, my friend gave me those crickets . . ." (July 8)

"You know Inma's idea about poison stuff, I think that if they eat it, they're gonna die." (July 9)

"You know how about that, um, that fort . . ." (July 10)

"I've got a question. I mean a comment." (July 10)

"You know what Juan said, I got something about that. My little baby cousin, he can run fast . . ." (July 11)

"You know her [Inma's] brother, how first she said . . ." (July 14)

"I have one more thing to say . . ." (July 14)

"I have something to say about El Salvador. My mom said, when she was young, she walked at night to her house all alone . . ." (July 14)

Miguel, however, did not view this storytelling moment as an opportunity for revision, but rather as a chance for shared tellership.

Getting Started with Multimodal Storytelling

My own involvement with multimodal literacy began six years ago with a workshop provided by the Center for Digital Storytelling, a family-run nonprofit organization based in California (see their website at <http://www.storycenter.org/>). I then worked as a teacher and mentor at Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth (DUSTY), a joint collaborative effort by Glynda Hull at the University of California at Berkeley and by Michaelangelo James at the nonprofit Prescott-Joseph Community Center. Through the combined efforts of countless community members, families, and UCB students, DUSTY has grown into an alternative space that welcomes children and adults to share their stories using whatever literacy means and modes available.

In both of these projects, we spent more time on the process of sharing our stories and talking about the craft of narration than we did on the final product created with the tools of technology, a focus that has since informed how I approach multimodal literacy in general. In the few for-profit ventures that I have observed in classrooms where I now do research, this emphasis often shifts to the final product, rather than the process.

With limited time and large numbers of students to assist, workshop leaders coming in from outside the school can focus only peripherally on the craft of writing. From a teacher's perspective, however, the benefits of multimodal literacy are outgrowths of good literacy pedagogy, not the availability of technological pizzazz.

Keeping this in mind, even teachers having very limited experience with technology can easily use multimodal storytelling. Here are a few suggestions:

- Start with PowerPoint (or its Apple equivalent, Keynote) as a way to layer text, image, voice, and music. Both allow for recording student voices, for importing music, for working with transitions, and for changing the settings so that the slideshow will run on its own without having to "click" to advance slides.
- Teachers more comfortable with technology might try using the movie-making software that typically comes as part of a computer's basic software package. Microsoft Office, for example, includes Windows MovieMaker, and Apple includes iMovie. Both allow students to work with timelines and with more advanced video applications.
- Using software such as MovieMaker, which is already part of a school's software package, is a great way to keep start-up costs low. This contrasts with commercially-available programs, such as Adobe Premiere, which cost hundreds of dollars.

I would encourage teachers to share their practices with their colleagues. Many teachers already have been using some form of multimodal literacy in their classrooms in innovative ways. This collective knowledge can provide a forum for sharing our own classroom stories about the possibilities of technology and literacy.

—Paige D. Ware

"You know about reading? Saturday I was reading *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. I was on page 17 and read to page 171, and next Sunday I read 171 to 290." (July 21)

These preambles secured him the floor, and his stories came tumbling out, decorated with giggles and with earnest, eager exclamations of their truth-value ("It's for real! I'm not kidding!") Conversation analyst Gail Jefferson (1978) describes such efforts to gain the floor as strategies to weave one's thinking into the ongoing conversation, regardless of any observable relevance to the topics under discussion. Miguel frequently used such linguistic strategies for making his comments appear to tie into the conversation, even when such connections might not have been apparent for the others present.

The shift into making multimodal stories was at first exciting for Miguel, and it appeared that his storytelling skills would serve him well within the public venue that technology provided. He was amazed to learn on the first day of the summer program that not only would he use a laptop computer, he would also make his own movie in five weeks:

Miguel: *In five weeks!?*

Ms. Shannon: *Yeah, you're right.*

Miguel: *Of our own?*

Ms. Shannon: *Yeah.*

Miguel: *What's the movie's name?*

Ms. Shannon: *Whatever you want. (July 8)*

Accustomed to stories of everyday tellership, however, when Miguel was presented with the open

challenge of deciding on a topic for his movie, he became concerned. He found it difficult to transfer his kind of everyday story to the performance expected in a multimodal format. For his movie's name, he finally chose "My Day at the Theater!" and wrote a short piece about a trip he took with his "cousin" Inma and some friends to see *Spider-man*. Nothing particularly climactic happened in this story. It unfolded as a chronological account of the trip with a few brief comments about the movie itself. During the class time allocated to work on his movie, he quickly lost interest and frequently asked to return to reading his library books.

In light of numerous reports of children's engagement with multimedia and technology, Miguel's preferences for telling everyday stories and for reading books seems unusual. Of the youth who have attended DUSTY during the years of my involvement, he has been one of very few children who do not automatically gravitate toward the computers. His ambivalence about the technology might have stemmed from his preference for shared tellership over the single tellership that seems to characterize multimodal storytelling. Or quite possibly, he was reluctant to perform his stories for a public audience, even though he was so clearly at home with the conversational enactment of everyday stories with multiple coauthors.

Over time, and through different kinds of exposure to technology, Miguel might well find that technology can provide him with personally meaningful ways to blend and mix his enjoyment of reading with the affordances of a multimedia world. But for the present, his experiences present an intriguing challenge to educators interested in understanding how certain kinds of storytellers' preferences might be inadvertently privileged or overlooked when technology intersects with storytelling.

CONCLUSION

Inma and Miguel's diverging experiences with technology as a resource for storytelling draw attention to the importance of studying "the ways that old and new ideas [about literacy] merge and clash across contexts" (Hagood, 2003, p. 390). Children and the teachers and other adults who work with them may use new technologies in ways that simply reproduce traditional perspectives of what counts as literacy, such as emphases on decoding, fluency, comprehen-

sion, and writing print-based texts. They may also provide innovative ways to reconsider literacy as a highly situated practice, dependent on children's attention to social interactions and the ways stories might shape their relationships. The challenge of my research has been to freeze the lens ever so briefly on the social dynamics of storytelling as they take place around technology.

For many teachers and children, technology has already become so much a part of the fabric of everyday learning and storytelling that we need to pose the question: How can we use technology in ways that contribute purposefully and meaningfully to the literacy classroom for different kinds of children? To suggest some answers, I have looked toward the examples of Inma and Miguel to understand how they made meaning through stories in a place where multiple modes of storytelling were encouraged and celebrated.

Tellability and tellership can be useful constructs for teachers who encounter children who resonate on different frequencies with the tools of technology, and teachers need to recognize how to work with the differences that students bring to these engagements. As Miguel so clearly illustrates, students do not always respond in predictable ways to the affordances of technology. The differences they bring to the classroom seem to be accentuated when storytelling moves from primarily oral (interactional) to digital. As educators, we do not necessarily need to concern ourselves with transforming Miguel into a child more like Inma, or with encouraging Inma to develop more facility with the forms of storytelling that involve shared tellership. Rather, we need to recognize that all children have stories to tell, and that the multiple venues for producing these stories need to be valued by teachers and by the classroom contexts in which stories are produced and shared.

Multimodal stories are not all alike, even though many seem to share tendencies toward single tellership and performance tellability. As we continue to learn more about the intersection of technology and storytelling, we will undoubtedly uncover new approaches and emphases that ensure more inclusive pedagogy for all children. Ms. Shannon, for example, found ways to engage Miguel in a group project that involved the collaborative efforts of each participant in the joint

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making of a movie. In this way, she was able to build on his strengths as a co-teller and his need for interactive storytelling as he gained expertise with the skills needed to work independently.

For Inma, Ms. Shannon ensured that the movies were all viewed by a public audience at the end of the summer program and crafted a space for her to speak publicly about her movie-making process. It is through the thoughtful practices of teachers like Ms. Shannon, and through the carefully documented experiences of a wide range of children like Miguel and Inma, that educators can slowly weave together new ways of storytelling in children's technology-rich literacy activities.

Author's Note: *DUSTY* is a university–community project under the direction and inspiration of Glynda Hull and Michaelangelo James. Their work is invaluable to the children who have told stories and created multimodal movies in this collaborative endeavor. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who provided insightful feedback. I am especially thankful to Shannon Stanton, whose guidance and enthusiasm have shaped all of our experiences at *DUSTY* in very positive ways.

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